combustion facilities. The granular material has granules which are preferably 1-10 mm in average diameter, more preferably 3 to 7 mm and most preferably about 5 mm.

IN THE CLAIMS:

Please amend the claims as follows:

Claim 1. (Amended) A process for continuously drying protein-containing sludge in a fluidized bed (20) through which a drying gas flows, wherein partially de-watered sludge (6) is added to the fluidized bed (20) in granulate form (21) and dried sludge (10) is removed therefrom,

wherein the granules are formed without the addition of dried substances and are applied to the fluidized bed (20) immediately following their production and are mixed with granular particles throughout various stages of drying contained in the fluidized bed.

Claim 2. (Amended) The process according to claim 1, wherein the granular material (21) or a preliminary product thereof is applied onto the fluidized bed (20) immediately following its production and by gravity.

Claim 3. (Amended) The process according to claim 1,

wherein the granular material (21) or a preliminary product thereof is introduced directly into the fluidized bed (20) below the surface (20a) thereof.

Claim 4. (Amended) The process according to any one of claims 1 to 3, wherein the granules (21) have an average diameter in the range of 1 to 10 mm.

Claim 5. (Amended) The process according to claim 1, wherein the partially de-watered sludge (6) is dried to have a dry substance content of at least 90% of the mass of the dried product.

Claim 6. (Amended) The process according to claim 1, wherein superheated water vapor is used as a drying gas.

Claim 7. (Amended) The process according to claim 1, wherein the process start-up is carried out by using a fluidized bed (20) of already dried sludge (10) in granulate form.

Claim 8. (Amended) The process according to claim 1, wherein the fluidized bed (20) is heated by means of a heat exchanger (16).

Claim 9. (Amended) The process according to claim 8, wherein saturated steam having a pressure above atmospheric is used as a heating medium for the heat exchanger (16).

Claim 10. (Amended) The process according to claim 1, wherein drying is performed at a pressure slightly above atmospheric pressure.

Claim 11. (Amended) The process according to claim 1, wherein drying is performed at a pressure slightly below atmospheric pressure.

Claim 12. (Amended) The process according to claim 1, wherein exhaust vapor expelled from the dried sludge (10) is compressed and condensed under the pressure elevated as a result of compression.

Claim 13. (Amended) A device for continuously drying protein-containing sludge in a fluidized bed (20), comprising

a drying container (13) which includes a lower receiving chamber (18) for drying gas and a gas-permeable support (19) for the fluidized bed (20),

a feeding component (14) for feeding partially de-watered sludge (6)

and a withdrawing component (17) for withdrawing the dried sludge (10),

said feeding component (14) having a granulating component (14a) adapted to apply the produced granules immediately to the fluidized bed (20) in which the granules are mixed with granular particles throughout the various stages of drying contained in the fluidized bed (20), and

said feeding component (14) does not include a means for admixing dried substances.

Claim 14. (Amended) The device according to claim 13, wherein an outlet (22) of the granulating component (14a) is positioned adjacent to, or inside, the peripheral wall of the drying container (13) and above the gas permeable support (19).

Claim 15. (Amended) The device according to claim 14, wherein the outlet (22) of the granulating component (14a) is positioned above a surface of the fluidized bed (20a).

Claim 16. (Amended) The device according to claim 14, wherein the outlet (22) of the granulating component (14a) is positioned below a surface (20a) of the fluidized bed.

Claim 17. (Amended) The device according to any one of claims 13 to 16, wherein the granulating component (14a) is

adapted to form a preliminary product of the granular material (21).

Claim 18. (Amended) The device according to claim 13, wherein the granulating component (14a) subjects granules to pressing forces during a granulating step.

Claim 19. (Amended) The device according to claim 18, wherein the granules (21) have an average diameter in the range of 1 to 10 mm.

Claim 20. (Amended) The device according to claim 13, wherein at least one heat exchanger (16) is present in the fluidized bed (20) and includes heat exchanger surfaces onto which the material of the fluidized bed (20) may be applied.

Claim 21. (Amended) The device according to claim 13, wherein the drying container (13) is adapted to be pressure-tight.

Claim 22. (Amended) The device according to claim 13, further comprising a component for recuperating heat energy from expelled exhaust gas, wherein said component comprises a compressor and a condenser.

Please add the following **new** claims:

--Claim 23. (New) The process according to claim 1, wherein the protein-containing sludge is a sewage sludge.

Claim 24. (New) The process according to claim 1, wherein the granules are formed with pressing.

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Claim 25. (New) The process according to claim 4, wherein the granules (21) have an average diameter in the range of 3 to 7 mm.--

Claim 26. (New) The process according to claim 4, wherein the granules (21) have an average diameter of about 5 mm.

Claim 27. (New) The process according to claim 9, wherein the saturated steam has a pressure of 5 to 25 bar.

Claim 28. (New) The process according to claim 12, wherein the exhaust vapor expelled from the dried sludge (10) is compressed and condensed under the pressure elevated as a result of compression in the heat exchanger (16) accommodated in the fluidized bed (20).

Claim 29. (New) The device according to claim 13, wherein the protein-containing sludge is a sewage sludge.

Claim 30. (New) The device according to claim 17, wherein the preliminary product of the granular material (21) is in the form of notched rods.

Claim 31. (New) The device according to claim 19, wherein the granules (21) have an average diameter of 3 to 7 mm.

Claim 32. (New) The device according to claim 19, wherein the granules (21) have an average diameter of about 5 mm.